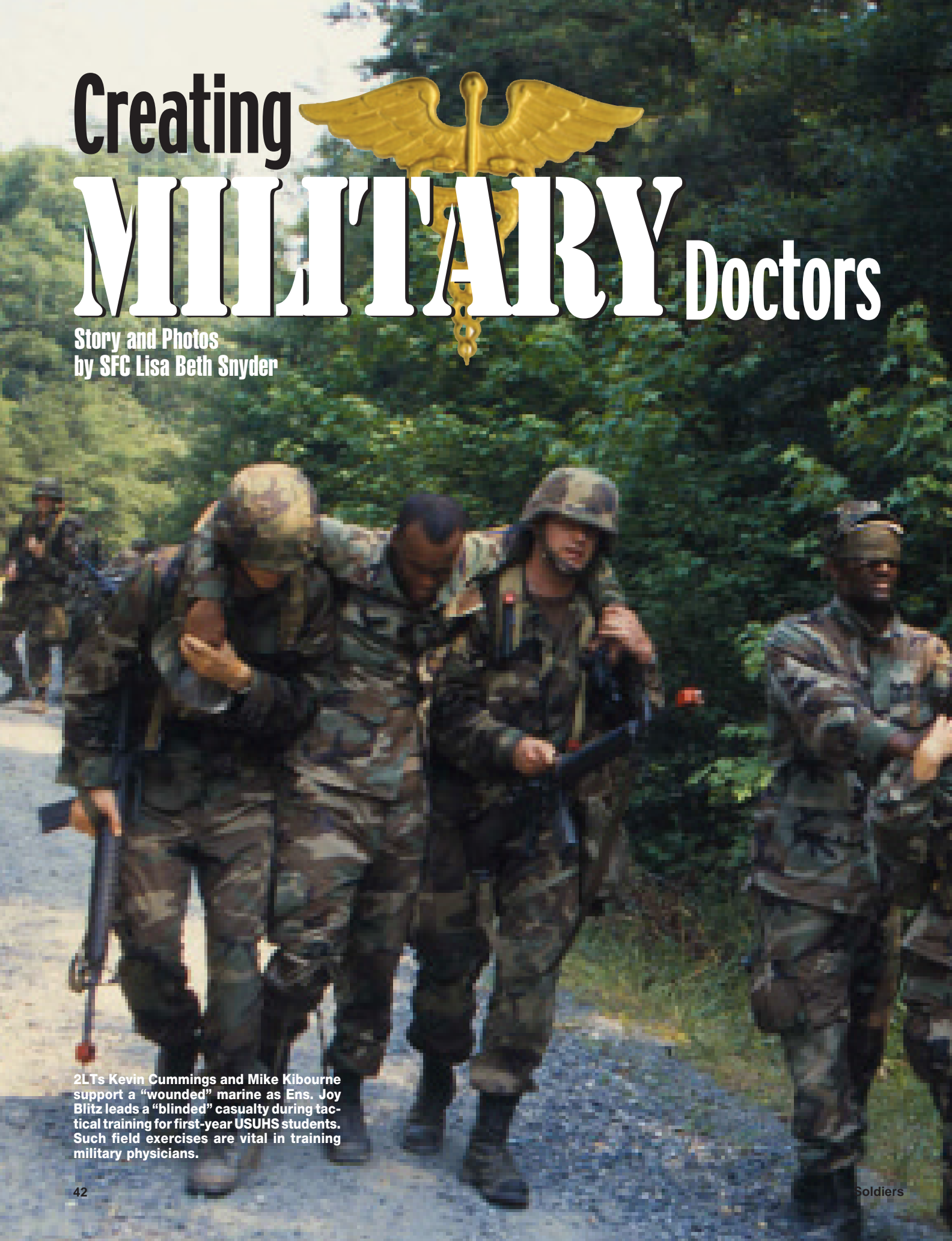


Soldiers *Online*

Creating MILITARY Doctors

Story and Photos
by SFC Lisa Beth Snyder



2LTs Kevin Cummings and Mike Kibourne support a “wounded” marine as Ens. Joy Blitz leads a “blinded” casualty during tactical training for first-year USUHS students. Such field exercises are vital in training military physicians.



The first-year USUHS medical students come under simulated enemy fire during the field training at Quantico Marine Corps Base, Va.

FOR centuries, doctors have been going to war.

“There is an old tradition of training medical personnel to go to war,” said Dr. Val G. Hemming, dean of the F. Edward Hébert School of Medicine at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences on the grounds of the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Md.

“Surgery was really largely born in military medicine,” said Hemming, a retired Air Force physician.

Military medical schools began to appear in the 18th century, he said. By 1900, France, Germany, Great Britain and Russia all had military medical schools.

The Uniformed Service University’s school of medicine opened its doors in 1976 and graduated its first class four years later. Graduates serve as commissioned medical officers in the Army, Air Force, Navy (which also provides medical care for the Marine Corps), Coast Guard and the Public Health Service.

Of the 3,104 physicians who have graduated from the university since 1980, 90 percent are still on active duty. They make up 20 percent of the military’s doctors.

“There is such a thing as military medicine, and military medicine is very different from civilian medicine,” Hemming said.

Hemming said that military medical personnel must practice good medicine in bad places, and in times of war they confront things that they would not normally see.



One of the challenges the medical students face during the urban operations leadership reaction course is trying to get a litter to the top of the “Combatville city hall.”





How to Apply

Applicants to the School of Medicine must:

- Be citizens of the United States.
- Be at least 18 years old at the time of matriculation, but no more than 30 as of June 30 in the year of admissions for civilians and enlisted personnel, or 36 for active-duty commissioned officers.
- Meet the requirements for holding a commission in the uniformed services.
- Be of sound moral character.
- Be motivated for a medical career in the uniformed services.
- Meet the school's academic, intellectual and personal qualifications.

Academic Requirements

Military medicine needs individuals with a variety of interests and talents; thus the school welcomes applications from individuals with diverse educational backgrounds.

Intellectual maturity, however, is an important consideration in admissions decisions. Applicants should be well-informed, knowledgeable individuals who have demonstrated competence in scholastic pursuits. They should be adept in organizing, analyzing and synthesizing factual information. Mathematical ability and background in the sciences — natural, physical and social — are expected.

On or before June 15th of the year of their planned matriculation, applicants must have attained a baccalaureate degree from an accredited academic institution in the United States, Canada or Puerto Rico. — *Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences Recruitment Office*

The school emphasizes the five components of military medicine, said Air Force Dr. (Lt. Col.) John M. Wightman, the director of UHHS's clinical science division in the department of military and emergency medicine.

The five areas are preventative and occupational medicine; trauma management and combat medical skills; behavioral medicine, including evaluating combat environments and dealing with combat stress; environmental medicine, such as dealing with heat, cold or extreme altitudes; and infectious diseases and tropical medicine, also known as global medicine.

Each individual component encompasses multiple disciplines, Wightman said.

Two required courses for all of the university's students are Military Contingency Medicine and Military Emergency Medicine. These courses teach students how to treat patients using fewer resources than are available in a hospital, he said.

The school has instruction on how to work in the operational environment, how to understand what the line

units are doing and understanding military organizational structure, Wightman said.

Uniformed Services University students have four weeks of military medicine in addition to field-training exercises and training at the simulation center at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C. The students become familiar with military medicine; joint operations; peace, humanitarian and disaster medicine; and officer-enlisted teamwork.

More than half the 165 members of the class of 2001 had a connection with the military before entering the university; some 15 percent of the class members had prior enlisted service.

Wightman said that while there are similarities between military and emergency medicine, military medicine can be practiced in austere environments without all specialties available. Emergency medicine is normally practiced in a hospital.

The Uniformed Services University medical school is one of three nationwide that require students to take the Advanced Trauma Life Support Course and is among the 25 percent of



The training conducted at Quantico (top and above) introduces the USUHS students to the challenges of both combat and military medical operations in urban areas.

schools for which emergency medicine training is a graduation requirement, Wightman said.

The university has required courses in public health and disease prevention, while most students at civilian medical schools get little instruction in preventative medicine, said Hemming, who specializes in pediatrics and infectious diseases.

It is the only school that teaches disaster and humanitarian-assistance medicine in an organized way, Wightman said. This and other required instruction adds about 700 hours to the institution's curriculum, compared with other accredited U.S. medical schools.

This period includes instruction that will help new doctors make the best use of recent advances in the practice of medicine, Hemming said.

Hemming added that one important advantage Uniformed Services University graduates have is an understanding of military culture.

"By the time they graduate, they are part of that system," he said. "How wonderful to have your physician know your job so he can take care of you."



Tangled ropes and an overturned litter tell the tale of a failed evacuation.

Evaluators observe student performance during a MOUT exercise. Military medical operations in such urban settings can be both challenging and hazardous.



USUHS students ready a litter in which they will move a "wounded aircrew member" discovered atop a building.





The occupational medical needs for service members, who could be assigned to submarines or high-performance aircraft, is very different from civilian occupational medical needs, Hemming said.

The medical school's students get much of their clinical training at the National Naval Medical Center next door, Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Malcolm Grow Medical Center at Andrews Air Force Base, Md., and Wilford Hall Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas.

In addition to teaching, USUHS faculty members also engage in a variety of research and publish their findings in such professional journals as *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, and they are subject to peer evaluation to maintain accreditation, Hemming said.

Most of the university's research focuses on military medicine, infectious diseases, public health and preventative medicine, he said. □

Officers & Doctors

RESearch changed 2LT Thomas N. Hoffmann's mind about his choice of medical schools.

When the former special forces medic returned to Fort Campbell, Ky., after his Advanced NCO Course, he told his wife that he would not go to "that Army medical school" even though he planned to practice medicine in the Army.

However, after reviewing data on entrance exams and specialty board exams and talking with the doctors he worked with, Hoffmann made the Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences his first choice.

"This school is more selective than any other school in the country," Hoffmann said.

Also, having served in the Army, he liked that the school draws students from around the country and not just its local area.

As a soldier he "didn't want to deal with competitive back stabbing" that he found at other medical schools he applied to, he said.

"Part of the reason we don't compete with each other is that we'll be working with each other for a long time," Hoffmann said. The students are on active duty once they begin the four-year program, and then must serve on active duty for at least seven

years after graduation.

He and two of his first-year classmates find that the school is family friendly, because the family support network and second lieutenant pay and allowances ease much of the stress of going to medical school while supporting a family.

As the wife and the daughter of soldiers, 2LT Amy E. Vertrees decided she wanted to serve her country while being a doctor. The Uniformed Services University allows her to start her service while in medical school.

The applicant interview at the university caused 2LT Andy Kagel to change four years of planning.

The former flight paramedic at the University of Virginia medical center had planned to attend the University of Virginia and then join the military. However, the scope of the Uniformed Services University's program and support network moved the school to the top of his list.

Kagel, who has never been affiliated with the military before, said he picked the Army because it matched the best with his flight medic training.

"If you are going to go into military medicine, it is better to be trained by the military," said 2LT Jordan Hall, a former enlisted soldier.

Kagel said the university graduates officers of the medical corps, not just doctors for the medical corps.

"Graduates will be better prepared to be military physicians, and by every measure I know of they are better physicians than those produced by any other university," Hoffmann said.

"We are trained to treat soldiers the best way that we can," Vertrees said.

Both Kagel and Hall would like to go into emergency medicine, while Hoffmann leans toward family friendly internal medicine and Vertrees is considering obstetrics/gynecological surgery.

"Your heart is in the care," Kagel said. — *SFC Lisa Beth Snyder*

USUHS student Jesse Rohloff assists in a simulated leg amputation inside a recreated Civil War hospital at Antietam National Battlefield.

